

REMARKS

Claims 1-26 are currently pending in the present application, with Claims 1, 2, and 5 being amended, and Claims 14-26 have been added. Reconsideration and reexamination of the claims, as amended and as added, are respectfully requested.

The Examiner objected to Claims 1 and 2 for certain informalities. Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 2 and respectfully submit that the amended claims comply with all formal requirements.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-13 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention. Applicants have amended Claims 1, 2, and 5, and respectfully submit that Claims 1-13 are in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112.

The Examiner rejected Claims 1-8 and 10 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Park et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,176,696 B1). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Park was filed in the U.S. on April 22, 1999. As the Examiner acknowledged, the present invention claims priority under 35 U.S.C. § 120 from PCT/JP99/01055, which was filed on March 4, 1999. Applicants hereby perfect that claim for priority by submitting a certified copy of the PCT application along with a certified English translation of the PCT application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Park is not a prior art reference to the present application under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), and that the rejection of Claims 1-8 and 10 is hence overcome.

The Examiner rejected Claims 5, 8, 9, and 11 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Park. This rejection is respectfully traversed. As discussed above, with the submission of a certified copy of the PCT application and its English translation, Applicants submit that Park is not a prior art reference to the present application under 35 U.S.C. § 102, and that the rejection of Claims 5, 8, 9, and 11 is hence overcome.

The Examiner rejected Claims 12 and 13 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Park in view of Mautz (U.S. Patent No. 5,904,800). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As already discussed above, Park is not a prior art reference to the present application in view of the Applicants' submission of a certified copy of the PCT application and an English translation thereof. Accordingly, the rejection of Claims 12 and 13 is thus overcome.

New Claims 14-26 have been added to claim further details of the present invention, and are respectfully submitted as in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending Claims 1-26 of the present application are in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and reexamination of the claims, as amended and as added, are respectfully requested, and an early allowance is solicited. If the Examiner believe it would further advance the prosecution of the present application, he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the specification and claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made".

In the unlikely event that the transmittal letter is separated from this document and the Patent Office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Assistant Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 285032005800.

Respectfully submitted,

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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

In the Claims:

Claims 1, 2, and 5 have been amended in the following manner:

1. (Twice amended) A process apparatus including an airtight process vessel, an exhaust system for exhausting gas from the process vessel, and a baffle plate for partitioning the process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system,

wherein the baffle plate includes a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein the inner surface of each slit is sloped at least along the slit length, said sloped surface being formed to having a depth not less than 1/4 of the thickness of the baffle plate,

wherein for each slit the opening facing the process chamber is larger than the opening facing the exhaust passage, and

wherein for each slit an angle θ formed between the sloped surface and an axis perpendicular to the openings of the slit falls within a range from 5° to 30° $[(5^\circ \leq \theta \leq 30^\circ)]$.

2. (Twice amended) The process apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the depth of the sloped surface is formed to not less than 1/2 [of the depth] of the thickness of the baffle plate.

5. (Twice amended) A process apparatus including an airtight process vessel, an exhaust system for exhausting gas from the process vessel, and a baffle plate for partitioning the process vessel into a process chamber for processing an object and an exhaust passage communicating with the exhaust system,

wherein the baffle plate includes a plurality of slits through which the process chamber and the exhaust passage communicate with each other,

wherein each slit includes an exhaust-passage opening facing the exhaust passage and a process-chamber opening facing the process chamber,

wherein at least one side of said process-chamber opening includes a sloped inner surface at least along the slit length, said sloped inner surface of the process-chamber opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate, and

wherein at least one side of said exhaust-passage opening includes an inner surface that is substantially perpendicular to the surface of the baffle plate, said inner surface of the exhaust-passage opening formed not more than 1/2 of the thickness of the baffle plate.